

Response to the Mayor's draft Cultural Strategy: 2012 and beyond



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**Greater London Authority
March 2010**

Published by
Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA
www.london.gov.uk

enquiries 020 7983 4100
minicom 020 7983 4458

ISBN

This publication is printed on recycled paper

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Contents

Introduction	6
The Mayor’s aims in his draft Cultural Strategy	8
Further comments on the draft Strategy	11
Conclusion and summary of recommendations	16
Appendix 1 Orders and translations	18
Appendix 2 Principles of scrutiny page	19

Introduction

The Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Mayor's draft Cultural Strategy. The Committee held a public meeting on 11 February 2010 to review the draft Strategy with Munira Mirza, the Mayoral Advisor on Arts and Culture, Iwona Blazwick, Chair of London Cultural Strategy Group and Uanu Seshmi, Consultant in social, emotional and young people issues, From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation.

In this introduction, we set out some general points on the draft Cultural Strategy and the role of the Mayor in supporting culture in the capital. The next section of this response considers in more detail the Mayor's specific aims as set out by his adviser and how these aims are reflected in the draft Strategy. The final section addresses some issues which were discussed at our meeting and we would like to see reflected in the final Strategy.

The role of the Mayor in supporting culture in the capital

The focus of our response is to seek clarification on the Mayor's role, priorities and actions in the crowded field of cultural policy in London. What can the Mayor offer to London's already rich cultural mix? The Committee recognises that culture is an area where the Mayor has limited influence. We therefore believe the Strategy should focus on the areas where the Mayor does have influence to make it a useful document.

The draft Strategy states the role of the Mayor is to work in partnership to set priorities, provide leadership and deliver long-term improvements for culture. It is these priorities and how the Mayor will provide the leadership that will deliver them that we expect to see in the final version of the Strategy. The final Strategy should provide a reference point against which activity in the sector can be judged; a Strategy needs to deliver a coherent vision rather than a series of isolated and uncoordinated initiatives.

Cultural projects across London are varied and diverse. How the Mayor and London Development Agency (LDA) decides which to support needs to be governed by a strategic vision and clear criteria. For example, the Strategy concludes that the Mayor and LDA will "support and continually review a city-wide, value for money programme of events and campaigns that will bring cultural, social and economic benefits to London". It also refers to the fact that the "LDA has supported numerous projects which showcase different

cultures in the city, such as the recently opened Tabernacle Arts in Notting Hill, and the construction of the new centres for the Black Cultural Archive in Brixton.”¹ However, it is unclear whether these projects are supported for their economic benefits or cultural and social and, if the latter, what criteria are used to judge.

This Committee was critical of the previous administration’s approach to the funding of cultural projects. Following an audit of LDA records on the funding of some major cultural initiatives, we concluded that “the information provided was of insufficient quality to give a rigorous explanation of why the LDA had become involved in a project”.² The Mayor’s Cultural Strategy is an opportunity to demonstrate that lessons have been learned from this and that funding decisions are derived from clear policies and strategic direction. Without this, future funding decisions will risk appearing as isolated initiatives rather than as part of a strategic approach to culture in the capital. The LDA’s 2008 Cultural Audit also highlighted gaps and inconsistencies in provision and would provide a useful basis with which to inform policy decisions.³

The need for this type of strategic direction is especially important given, as the Mayor’s cultural adviser acknowledged to the Committee, there is likely to be less resource available to support directly cultural projects in the capital as a result of the economic downturn and the pressure on LDA budgets.

As well as providing a basis for funding decisions, the final Strategy is an opportunity to demonstrate creative thinking in the use of resources and ways of obtaining increased resources from the private sector through sponsorship. This is not evident from the current draft Strategy.

The Mayor’s adviser described his three main aims in relation to culture policy: to provide events for all Londoners; to develop policy and strategic partnerships; and to strengthen infrastructure. We consider these in the following section before examining wider issues which the final Strategy might address.

¹ Draft Cultural Strategy page 12

² The London Development Agency’s funding of Cultural Projects, Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee, November 2007, p 12

³ “A cultural audit”, March 2009

The Mayor's aims in his draft Cultural Strategy

In examining the three main aims of the Mayor as described by his Adviser on Arts and Culture, Munira Mirza, we seek to highlight how these aims might be developed to provide the necessary strategic framework that will inform and govern decisions.

1. To provide events for all Londoners

There have been significant changes from the last administration in the scale and selection of events supported by the GLA and LDA. This is illustrated for example in the reduced funding for Black History Month confirmed by Munira Mirza,⁴ the cancellation of the Trafalgar Square Festival and the Africa Day festival and reduced funding from the GLA and LDA for other events.⁵ Two new GLA-led events took place in 2009: the Rhythm of London and the Story of London. The Mayor has also proposed a new event, America Day.

The final Strategy is an opportunity to set out the rationale for these funding decisions.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Strategy sets out the criteria used to decide which events are to be financially supported by the Mayor. For example, events could result in increased tourist visits to London or contribute to wider Mayoral objectives. The Strategy should also show how the objective of providing events for all Londoners is to be met.

The Mayor should publish alongside the Strategy an events plan, which includes a full list of planned and future events with costs and timings.

⁴ confirmed by Munira Mirza on BBC Politics Show, 21 February 2010 at approximately 42 minutes, http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/the_politics_show_london

⁵ Including London Mela, Chinese New Year, Thames Festival, Carnaval del Pueblo, Black History Month and Simcha/Klezfest. Response from Boris Johnson to Jennette Arnold [Question 1352/2009], 21 May 2009

2. To develop policy and strategic partnerships

The second stated area of the Mayor's role is to develop policy and strategic partnerships. There is no single delivery agency for culture in London and the draft Strategy correctly highlights the problem that "London's cultural sector is remarkably complex, and there is a confusing myriad of funding schemes, initiatives and government agencies, leading to waste and inefficiency."⁶

The Committee believes that the Strategy is an opportunity to respond to this conclusion by focusing on what action the Mayor will lead and how he will help co-ordinate the work of other bodies.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the draft Strategy sets out how and in what areas the Mayor proposes to provide the policy lead and how, in practical terms, the Mayor will coordinate the disparate cultural agencies and funding schemes to minimise confusion and duplication.

The Mayor has the power to appoint the national member of Arts Council England for London, subject to Secretary of State approval. He is also entitled to appoint four regional council members. We note though that the Council is omitted from the 'Working in Partnership' section of the Strategy.⁷ The Mayor will also make a four year appointment to represent London on the Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) national council from March 2010.⁸

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Mayor sets out in his Strategy in what ways he is seeking to influence the work of Arts Council London and the Museums Libraries and Archives national council through his powers of appointment.

⁶ page 4 of Strategy

⁷ page 77 of the Strategy, section 6.2

⁸ Page 76 of the Strategy: "Until March 2010, the Mayor has the right to appoint the Chair of MLA London plus one board member. After this date, MLA London will be integrated into MLA's national organisation, in line with the other English regions. The Mayor will then make a four-year appointment to represent London on the MLA's national council."

3. To strengthen infrastructure

The third aspect of the Mayor's role, as described by Munira Mirza, is to strengthen infrastructure. However, it is not clear from the Strategy how the Mayor proposes to do this, especially in Outer London, which is a priority in his document. The Committee would welcome more detail that shows how the Mayor will fulfil this aim.

As we described in our introduction, the GLA is not a major direct funder of the culture sector in London; the Mayor invests in cultural projects mostly through the LDA. The draft Strategy states the LDA will invest in cultural programmes that address market failure and are proven to encourage enterprise support, skills, business promotion, employment and regeneration. There is no further detail on what the Mayor considers to be the role of the LDA in strengthening infrastructure and directly funding cultural programmes.

A significant reduction in the LDA's grant income from central government is expected⁹, while the Agency is also making spending cuts in response to the shortfall in the Olympic land budget. This is likely to affect LDA funding of the GLA-led events programme which is currently the major source and direct funding of cultural projects. Munira Mirza stated the LDA will have to think carefully about what it funds in the future.

Iwona Blazwick told the Committee that there needs to be continuity in funding. She stated if training grants that are funding young peoples' internships across the sector are cut, it would send out a very bad signal.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Strategy sets out what guidance the Mayor will provide to the LDA on which cultural projects to fund and how the impact of funding will be measured. We further recommend that the LDA provide an impact assessment where funding is proposed to be withdrawn, cut or not renewed.

⁹ *Draft LDA Investment Strategy 2010-2013*, Public Item 2.2, Appendix 4, London Development Agency Board, 16 September 2009

Further comments on the draft Strategy

The Committee believes there is potential for the Strategy to be a more coherent and focused document and we set out how this might be achieved below:

Measuring impact

The document needs to set out the policies the GLA will implement and how the impact of these interventions will be measured, so it is clear what value the Mayor is adding to the sector. Where the Mayor is not directly responsible and the GLA is not accountable, we believe that these should not be presented in the Mayor's Strategy as a policy proposal. For example, the first policy proposal in the Cultural Olympiad section of the draft Strategy is to ensure world-class opening and closing ceremonies that celebrate London and promotes it to the world. It is unclear what role or influence the Mayor is likely to have in the delivery of this objective.

Barriers to cultural participation

There is a mixed performance across London's boroughs in cultural engagement: some areas have extremely high levels of engagement, whilst others including parts of inner London have some of the lowest levels of engagement in cultural activity in the country. The draft Strategy shows that although London has a reputation as one of the world's great culture capitals, the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2007 scored London's boroughs lower for culture than any other region in the country.¹⁰

A 2008 report from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) states one of the biggest barriers to audience engagement is the idea held by many that the arts are simply not for them.¹¹ Other reasons cited in the Mayor's draft Strategy include the comparative age, income, and mobility of residents plus the concentration of cultural venues in the area they live.

The Strategy is an opportunity for the Mayor to set out the practical ways to improve engagement in London. The DCMS Report shows that harnessing new technology and encouraging productions to tour around the country are two ways of increasing engagement.

¹⁰ The Mayor's draft Cultural Strategy; 2012 and Beyond, page 31

¹¹ Supporting Excellence in the Arts, Sir Brian McMaster, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, January 2008

Following the closure of the Arts Council's touring department¹², there is a gap in provision.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Strategy sets out how the Mayor plans to help break down barriers to cultural participation. These plans should include how the Mayor can help to harness new technology and increase touring as ways of increasing engagement.

Borough involvement

The Mayor sits between the two main funders of culture in London: central and local government. Local government is the largest funder of culture and sport in the capital, accounting for half of the £1 billion of public funding invested every year.¹³ However, the draft Strategy concedes that with falling tax revenues, reduced funding from Central Government and increasing demands of services, London boroughs will struggle to maintain the same levels of support in the years ahead. Culture does not seem to be a borough priority: there is no mention of culture in the forthcoming '*Developing a Manifesto*' document which sets out London borough leaders' thoughts on some of the biggest issues facing the capital over the coming years.

In addition, the Committee believes the Strategy does not give enough emphasis to promoting existing resources. There is an opportunity for the Mayor to demonstrate how he will promote cultural projects which already exist, especially in Outer London, including local theatres, art galleries and libraries. Some excellent institutions have a low profile in Outer London and this needs to be addressed in the Strategy.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Strategy sets out how the Mayor proposes to use his strategic powers and influence to safeguard cultural provision and ensure

¹² Supporting Excellence in the Arts, Sir Brian McMaster, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, January 2008

¹³ <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/culturetourismand2012/PlayingTheirPart.htm>

that every Londoner has the opportunity to engage in culture in their local area.

Culture and young people

Culture has a significant role in enriching the lives of young Londoners. Young people should be given the opportunity to experience culture both within and outside school. Iwona Blazwick told the Committee that not all schools know about the cultural offer in London and how to take advantage of it and this means that some young Londoners are losing out.

The Committee welcomes the focus on young people as a priority in the Strategy but believes this could be reflected in a more ambitious programme. The two policy proposals presented by the Mayor's Advisor at our Committee meeting were: providing information on music education provision across London and encouraging classics tuition. The Mayor recently held a reception at City Hall to promote Latin and Greek tuition. The representative of the From Boyhood to Manhood expressed some scepticism about this: "In a desert, people want water...it's like giving them religion."¹⁴ The Mayor should demonstrate how he believes greater exposure to Latin and Greek represents the most pressing issue in expanding the cultural horizons of young Londoners, particularly those from disadvantaged communities.

On the Mayor's proposals for providing information on music provision, the Committee would like the Strategy to clarify how the Mayor's message will get across to the widest audience. For example, details of how many people received and acted upon the information contained in the music provision booklet would demonstrate the policy's effectiveness. Furthermore, how the next edition will be marketed so it reaches more children will be critical to its success.

Since the publication of the draft Cultural Strategy, the Mayor has launched a new fund to increase music education in the capital.¹⁵ He has unveiled plans for £250,000 aimed at increasing music education

¹⁴ Uanu Seshmi, Director of From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation, 11 February 2010

¹⁵ http://www.london.gov.uk/media/press_releases_mayoral/mayor-launches-new-fund-increase-music-education-capital

across the capital. The Committee would welcome more information about the scope of this project, including how many children the Mayor hopes to encourage into music education.

The Committee also believes the focus on music education could be widened. The Strategy could address how the Mayor is encouraging other cultural subjects, such as drama and the performing arts, film, music, literature and London's cultural heritage. Lessons could be learned from a government run programme in Norway, known as the Cultural Rucksack.¹⁶ It enables school pupils from 6 to 19 to become acquainted with high Arts and Culture.

The Strategy states that "the GLA has no direct powers over the national curriculum or the ability to provide funding for cultural education. But more can be done to support teachers and parents to better navigate the range of programmes on offer that can help to supplement learning."¹⁷ Iwona Blazwick told the Committee that not all schools know about the cultural offer in London and how to take advantage of it. However, the Strategy also states that "some teachers feel 'bombarded' by the information and opportunities available, with little means of assessing which to take up."¹⁸ It will therefore be important to outline what the GLA will do to ensure children know about the full range of cultural activities in London.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the Strategy sets out how many children and young people the proposed policies are expected to encourage to take part in cultural activities and how this will be monitored.

The Strategy should set out more clearly what the GLA will do more to inform teachers and parents about the cultural provision on offer in London.

¹⁶ http://www.denkulturelleskolesekken.no/oversettelser/brosjyre_engelsk08.pdf

¹⁷ Page 46 of the Strategy

¹⁸ Page 44 of the Strategy

Cultural Olympiad

The draft Strategy states that London won the Olympic bid in part due to its passionate commitment to the cultural programme and the promise to make a meaningful and long-lasting transformation in East London.

The Cultural Olympiad is a timely vehicle to encourage people to participate in cultural activities. However, as the Director of the Cultural Olympiad confirmed to the Committee, public awareness about the project remains low.¹⁹

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Strategy clearly sets out how the Mayor intends to raise the profile of the Cultural Olympiad amongst Londoners, and states the aims and objectives for the Mayor and the Greater London Authority regarding the Cultural Olympiad.

¹⁹ Ruth MacKenzie, Director of the Cultural Olympiad speaking at EDCST Committee meeting, 24 February 2010

Conclusion and summary of recommendations

In conclusion, the Committee would like to see the final version of the Strategy place more emphasis on the areas where the Mayor has an influence on cultural policy and a clear strategic direction which will inform funding decisions and other GLA-group activity. The delivery of the Strategy is key and the Committee believes more information on specific timelines and costings for delivery and how the impact of this Strategy will be measured will strengthen this document.

Specifically, the Committee makes the following recommendations on the draft Strategy to inform development of the final version:

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Strategy sets out the criteria used to decide which events are to be financially supported by the Mayor. For example, events could result in increased tourist visits to London or contribute to wider Mayoral objectives. The Strategy should also show how the objective of providing events for all Londoners is to be met.

The Mayor should publish alongside the Strategy an events plan, which includes a full list of planned and future events with costs and timings.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the draft Strategy sets out how and in what areas the Mayor proposes to provide the policy lead and how, in practical terms, the Mayor will coordinate the disparate cultural agencies and funding schemes to minimise confusion and duplication.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Mayor sets out in his Strategy in what ways he is seeking to influence the work of Arts Council London and the Museums Libraries and Archives national council through his powers of appointment.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Strategy sets out what guidance the Mayor will provide to the LDA on which cultural projects to fund and how the impact of funding will be measured. We

further recommend that the LDA provide an impact assessment where funding is proposed to be withdrawn, cut or not renewed.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Strategy sets out how the Mayor plans to help break down barriers to cultural participation. These plans should include how the Mayor can help to harness new technology and increase touring as ways of increasing engagement.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Strategy sets out how the Mayor proposes to use his strategic powers and influence to safeguard cultural provision and ensure that every Londoner has the opportunity to engage in culture in their local area.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the Strategy sets out how many children and young people the proposed policies are expected to encourage to take part in cultural activities and how this will be monitored.

The Strategy should set out more clearly what the GLA will do more to inform teachers and parents about the cultural provision on offer in London.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Strategy clearly sets out how the Mayor intends to raise the profile of the Cultural Olympiad amongst Londoners, and states the aims and objectives for the Mayor and the Greater London Authority regarding the Cultural Olympiad.

Appendix 1 Orders and translations

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Chinese

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Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

Greek

Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.

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Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਅਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज़ का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا منکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Arabic

الحصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغتك،
فارجاء الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على
العنوان البريدي العادي أو عنوان البريدي
الإلكتروني أعلاه.

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં
જાણતી હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો
અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઇ-મેઇલ સરનામા
પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

Appendix 2 Principles of scrutiny page

An aim for action

An Assembly scrutiny is not an end in itself. It aims for action to achieve improvement.

Independence

An Assembly scrutiny is conducted with objectivity; nothing should be done that could impair the independence of the process.

Holding the Mayor to account

The Assembly rigorously examines all aspects of the Mayor's strategies.

Inclusiveness

An Assembly scrutiny consults widely, having regard to issues of timeliness and cost.

Constructiveness

The Assembly conducts its scrutinies and investigations in a positive manner, recognising the need to work with stakeholders and the Mayor to achieve improvement.

Value for money

When conducting a scrutiny the Assembly is conscious of the need to spend public money effectively.

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